



Resource Parent Training

Sexual and Reproductive Wellness for Youth in Foster Care

California Department of Social Services
Permanency Policy Bureau
Placement Services and Support Unit

May 2019

Welcome & Thank You for Joining Us!

Please share

- Your Name
- Ages of children (biological or foster) currently living in your home
- How long have you been a foster caregiver?

Think you know all the different forms of
contraception that are out there??
Let's test your knowledge!

Contraception Methods

Taboo Game

Outline of Today's Training

- I. Why “Sexual and Reproductive Wellness” Matters
- II. Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights for Youth in Foster Care and the Caregiver's Role
- III. How to Engage with Youth about Sexual and Reproductive Wellness
 - A. Overview of Sexual Development
 - B. Talking to Youth about Sex, their Bodies and Relationships
 - C. Helping Youth Understand Consent
- IV. Conclusion and Wrap Up

Part I: Why Sexual and Reproductive Wellness Matters



“Wellness is not merely the absence of disease and infirmity, but a state of whole physical, mental, emotional and relational well-being.” – World Health Organization

- *Sexual and reproductive health* is a core aspect of our identity and an important part of one’s health and well-being.

Sexual and Reproductive Wellness

We are not just talking about sex here!

- Sexual and Reproductive Wellness includes understanding healthy boundaries and relationships
- This topic is less intimidating to discuss with youth when we think about the different components there are to discuss:

Health & Reproduction

Intimacy (does not always include sex!)

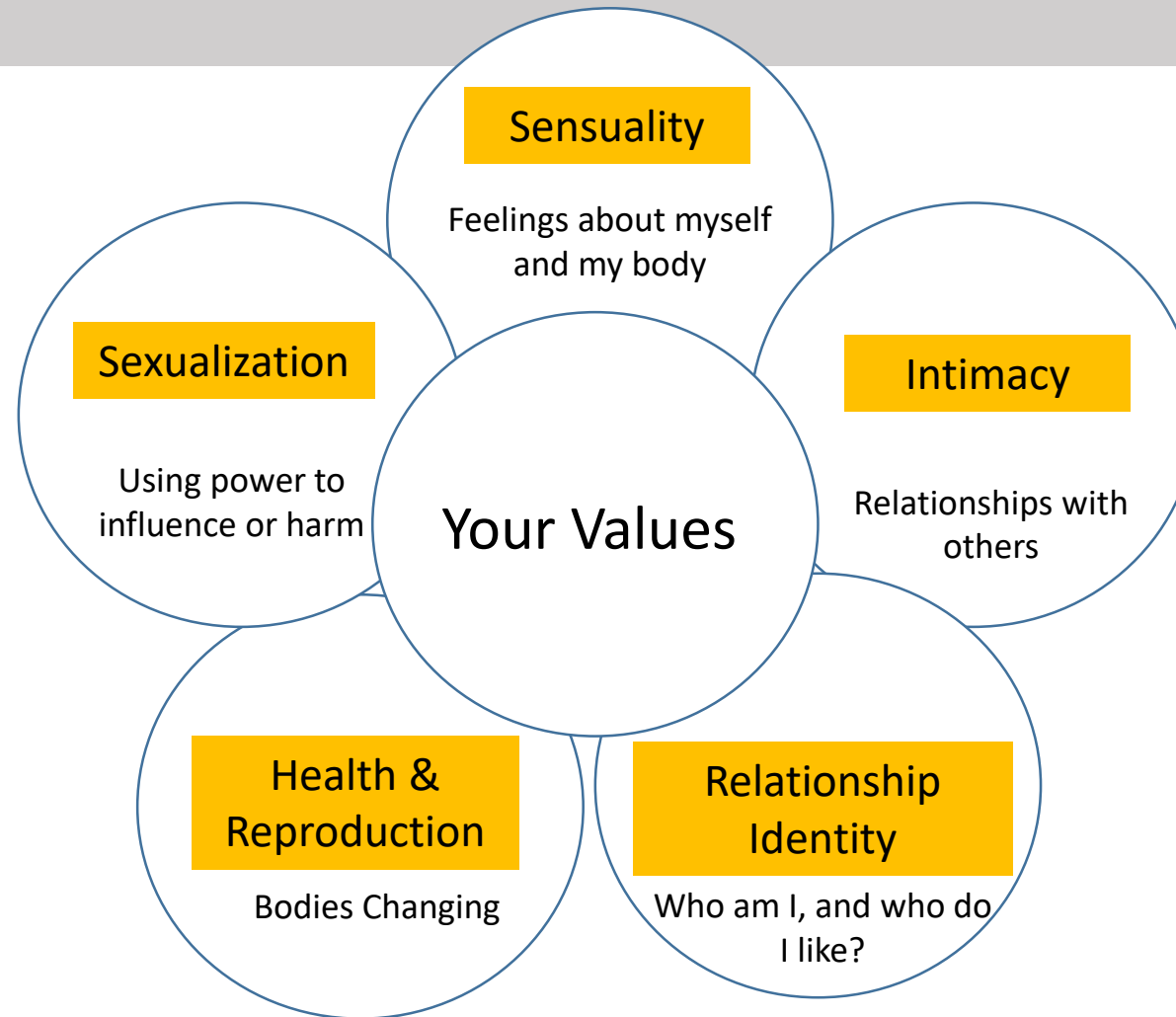
Sexualization

Sensuality

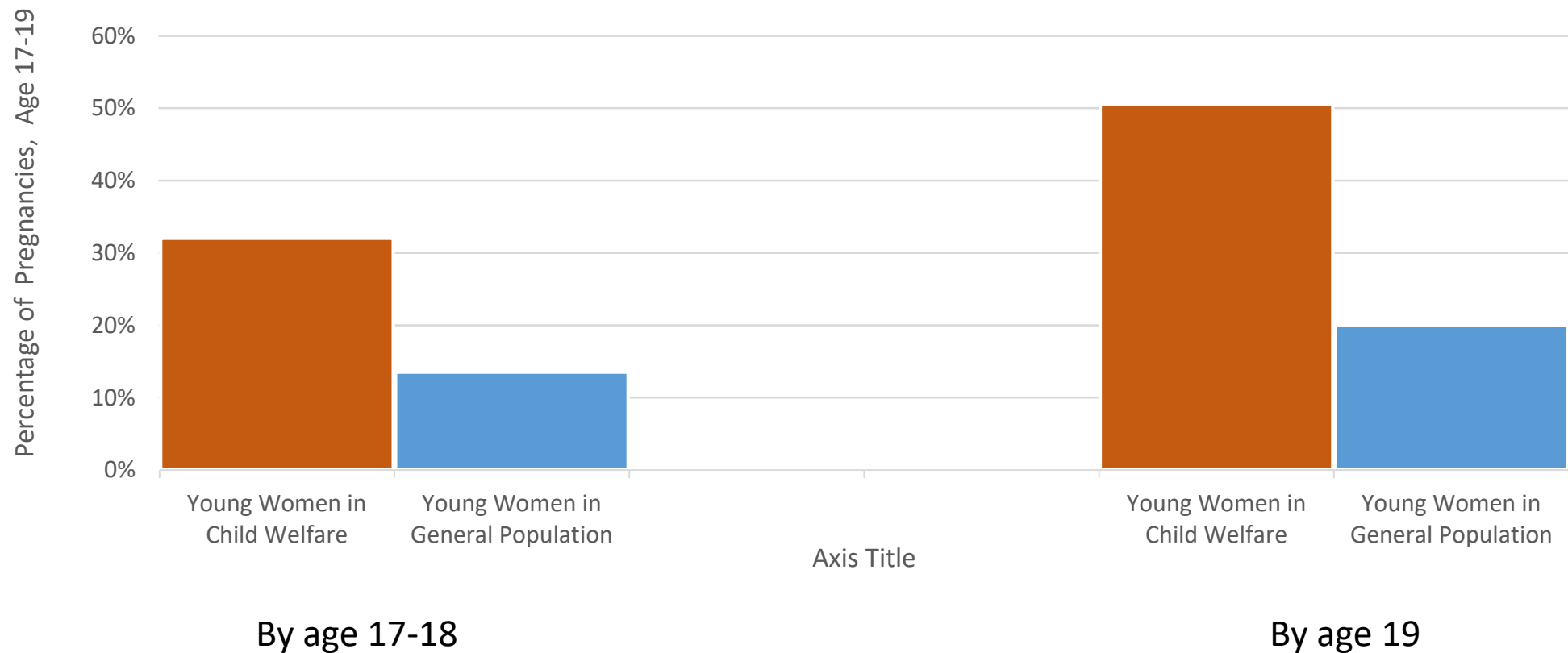
Relationship Identity

Different components that can impact Sexual and Reproductive Health

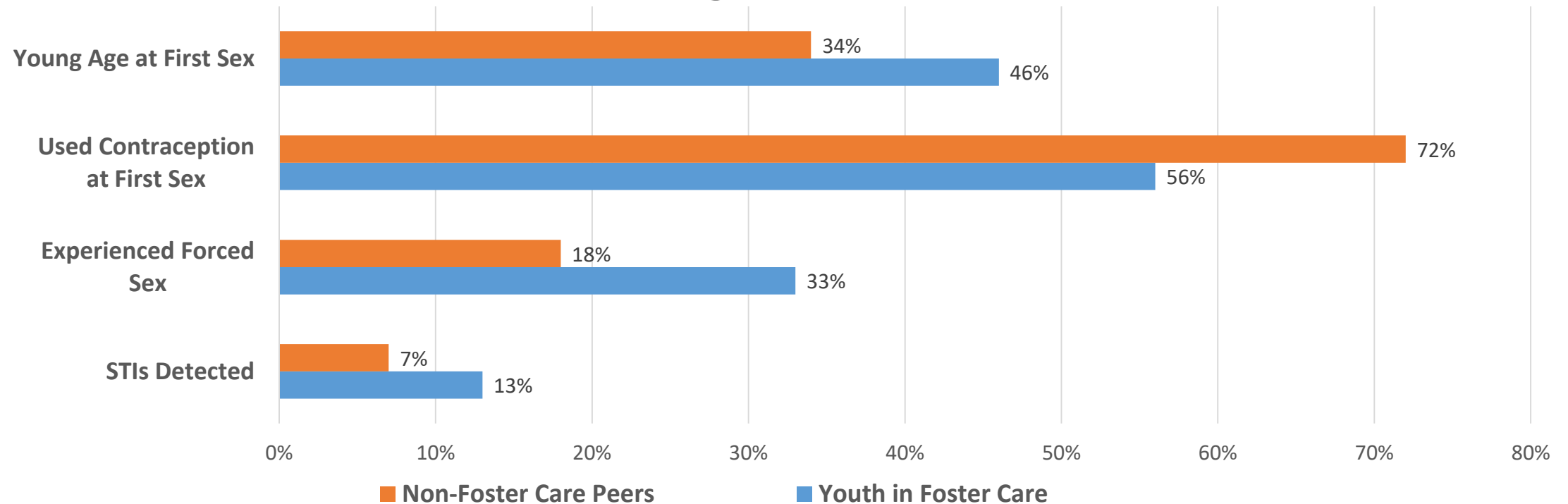
The Wellness Wheel



Comparison of Unintended Pregnancy Among Young Women in Foster Care and General Population



Reproductive Health Outcomes Among Young Adults In Foster Care vs General Population Age 18-26




The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy. (2009)

Access To Information Is Important For Youth In Care

Youth in foster care need access to age-appropriate, medically accurate information about sexual and reproductive health care, including:

- Unplanned pregnancy prevention,
- Abstinence,
- Use of birth control,
- Abortion,
- Prevention & treatment of STIs.



“Listen to us
first, then
educate us
later.”

Statewide Efforts to Decrease Unintended Pregnancy in the CA Foster Care System

In 2016, the CA Department of Social Services formed the *Healthy Sexual Development (HSD) Workgroup* to develop a statewide pregnancy prevention plan along with other resource materials to help **address, communicate, and act upon** the reproductive and sexual health care needs of youth and young adults in foster care.

<http://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/Foster-Care/Healthy-Sexual-Development-Project>

“Sexual and Reproductive Wellness for Youth in Foster Care”

To comply with *Senate Bill 89, Statutes of 2017*, county social workers, probation officers, group home/short-term residential therapeutic program administrators, and dependency court judges are required to be trained on sexual and reproductive health rights and issues of foster youth.

Caregivers are now required to receive this information during their preapproval training and may attend training on this topic as part of their annual required certification hours.

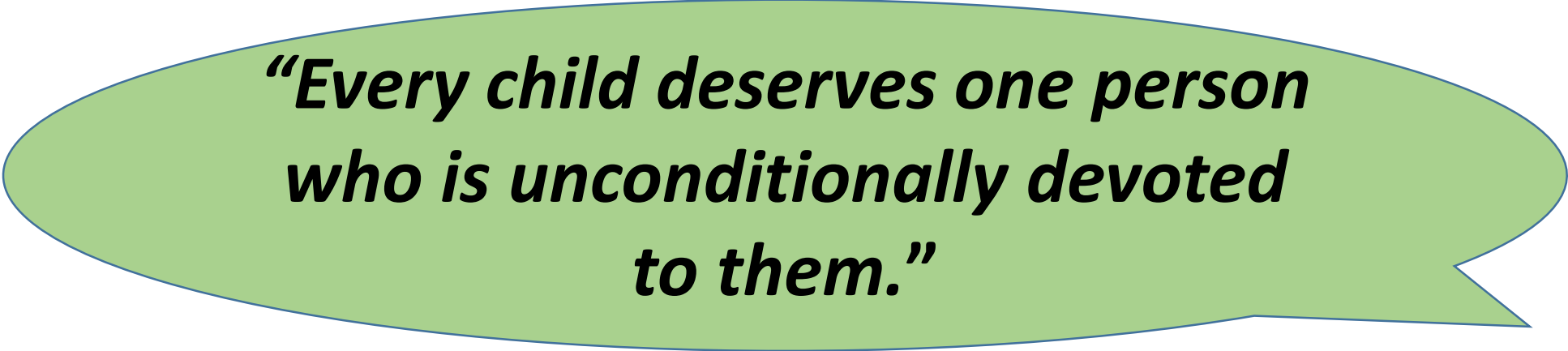
An E-Learning course is coming soon!

Part II: Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights and the Caregiver's Role



**A family doesn't
need to be
perfect; it just
needs to be
united.**

Foster & Kinship Caregivers hold a **critical role** in assisting youth with their reproductive and sexual health wellness and also in supporting the decisions the youth makes.



“Every child deserves one person who is unconditionally devoted to them.”

Your Support is Essential to a youth's well-being!

Relationships between caregivers and youth that are **warm, communicative, and reasonable** are associated with positive outcomes for youth, such as:

- Higher self-esteem,
- Higher rates of socially competent behavior,
- Better performance in school,
- Lower rates of depression, drug use, and **early teen pregnancy**

Ways a Caregiver Can Demonstrate they are Affirming and Supportive to Youth in Foster Care

Be **approachable**

Be **respectful** of a young person's feelings

Be **responsive**

Be **open** and
honest

Be a “**bridge**”

Be **kind**

**Know
Your
Sexual
and
Reproductive
Health
Rights**

KNOW
your **RIGHTS**

KNOW
your **RIGHTS**

Youth in Foster Care have Sexual and Reproductive Health Care Rights!

**Please review the CDSS youth brochure
and CDSS All County Letter 16-82 in
your resource materials.**

***“Give us a
Voice! If
you don’t
give us a
voice,
advocate
for us!”***

Know Your Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights

KNOW your RIGHTS

Your Sexual and Reproductive Health Care and Related Rights

No judgements! You have the right to sexual health information that only includes medical facts and not anyone's opinions.

Do you know your rights when it comes to your sexual and reproductive health? Even if you're under age 18, you have rights! Knowledge is power, so read your rights below:

1. You have the right to have your personal rights explained and provided to you in a manner that you understand.
2. You have the right to get health care, including reproductive and sexual health care.

Continue reading to learn more about what kind of reproductive and sexual health care services you can get.



3. You have the right to make your own decision about the following kinds of care (meaning you can say "yes" or "no" and do not need permission from a parent, caregiver, social worker, or any other adult if you want this care):
 - a. Female or male birth control or protection, pregnancy testing, and prenatal (pregnancy) care, at any age.
 - b. Abortion, at any age.
 - c. Health care you need because of a rape or sexual assault, at any age.
 - d. Health care to prevent sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV, at age 12 or older, and
 - e. Testing and treatment for STIs and HIV, at age 12 years or older.
4. You have the right to get the information you want about sexual health care. You can ask your doctor or another trusted adult about:
 - a. Reproductive and sexual health care.
 - b. Ways to prevent pregnancy and pregnancy testing.
 - c. Abortion.
 - d. Prenatal (pregnancy) care, like monthly or weekly doctor visits during pregnancy, and
 - e. How to prevent and treat STIs, including HIV medication and the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination.

5. When you get sexual or reproductive health care, or ask your doctor questions about sex, your doctor cannot share that information with your parents, caregivers, group home, social worker, or probation officer without your written consent. There are a few small exceptions.
6. You have the right to ask your doctor to explain "privacy" to you and you can and cannot get your medical information before you get any health care.
7. You have the right to choose your own health care provider for sexual and reproductive health care, as long as the provider is covered by your Medi-Cal or other approved insurance.
8. Your caregiver, group home, or social worker must help you with transportation to get reproductive and sexual health care services in a timely manner.
9. You have the right to get, have, and use the birth control or protection of your choice, including, but not limited to:
 - a. Condoms, including the female condom
 - b. Diaphragm
 - c. Birth control patch, pill, ring, or shot
 - d. Spermicide
 - e. Dental dam
 - f. Emergency contraception (morning after pill)
 - g. Medications to prevent STIs
 - h. Intrauterine Device (IUD) or Implant
 - i. Medications to treat or prevent HIV such as Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) or Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP)

10. You have the right to keep your personal items, like birth control, in your own private storage space. Condoms or other protection, or birth control cannot be taken away from you as a punishment or due to your caregiver's religious beliefs or personal feelings. You have the right to be free from unreasonable searches of your belongings.
11. You have the right to fair and equal access to services, placement, care, treatment, and benefits. You have the right to not be treated unfairly, harassed, or discriminated against because of your sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, HIV status, or other factors like race, religion, ethnic group identification, ancestry, national origin, color, or mental or physical disability.
12. You have the right to contact and make complaints about violations of your rights to state agencies, including the Community Care Licensing Division of the California Department of Social Services and the state Foster Care Ombudsperson (See the "Resources" section of this brochure for more information).

Complaints are confidential and you cannot be threatened or punished for making complaints.

Foster Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health Care Rights

TALKING TO OTHERS ABOUT SEX AND YOUR RIGHTS: SUGGESTED QUESTIONS TO ASK

Whether you're abstinent (not having any sex), thinking about having sex, or already sexually active, it's important and okay to talk about sex and relationships with a trusted adult. Your trusted adult may be a doctor, social worker, mentor, attorney, judge, teacher, family member or someone else you feel comfortable talking to. It is also important and okay to talk about these things with a romantic partner. But how do you know what to say or how to start a conversation? It is not always easy, so here are some suggested questions to start the conversation:

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR PARTNER

- » Will you respect my decision about sex, and about what I'm okay doing and not doing? How do you feel about my decision?
- » How are we going to make sure we protect ourselves against STIs?
- » Have you ever tested positive for an STI? If so, were you treated?
- » Are you having sex with other people?
- » Have you thought about your future goals? How do you feel about an unplanned pregnancy?

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR DOCTOR

About your rights...

- » I know I have a right to privacy in sexual and reproductive health care. What does that mean in this office? Are you always going to ask for my written permission before you share any of my information?

About birth control or protection...

- » How do I know what birth control method is right for me? What are the common side effects of the different birth control methods?
- » Will my caregiver or parent find out if I decide to use a birth control? Can they pressure me to use a certain kind of birth control?
- » Do I need to use birth control or condoms if I'm transgender or dating someone of the same gender as me?
- » How do you use a condom correctly?
- » What is emergency contraception and how can I get it?

About STIs...

- » I had sex without a condom. Should I get tested for an STI and/or pregnancy?
- » What do I need to know about STIs, including testing, treatment, and prevention?



QUESTIONS TO ASK A TRUSTED ADULT

About relationships...

- » What does a healthy relationship look like? How can I show my partner I love them?
- » Is jealousy a sign of love?
- » I'm being hurt or threatened by my partner. What can I do?
- » I feel like my partner is pressuring me to have sex or do things I am not ready for or feel uncomfortable with. What should I do?
- » How do I know when I'm ready to have sex with someone?

About sexuality and gender identity...

- » How does someone know they are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning?
- » If I have a same sex crush, does this mean I'm gay or lesbian?
- » Can I sleep in a room or use the restroom based on the gender I identify with?
- » Is touching myself wrong? Is it okay if I'm in a private place such as my bedroom or bathroom?

About going to visit the doctor...

- » How do I make an appointment to visit the doctor? Are doctor appointments confidential between me and my doctor?
- » What information and documents will I need when I visit the doctor?
- » I need information about local community resources and public transportation to visit the doctor. Where can I get this information?

About pregnancy or birth control...

- » I need information about birth control. Where can I get this information?
- » Does someone have the right to take away my birth control or condoms?
- » Can someone force me to go on birth control?
- » I think I might be pregnant. Where can I get information about pregnancy testing, prenatal care (if I need it) and/or the different options that are available?



Resources:

California Office of the Foster Care Ombudsperson – To file a complaint regarding your foster youth rights, contact the Ombudsperson at 1-877-846-1602 or email fosteryouthhelp@dss.ca.gov

California Department of Social Services, Community Care Licensing – To file a complaint against a state licensed group home or foster home call 1-844-538-8766

www.genderspectrum.org/ – Information and resources about gender sensitive topics

www.glaad.org/transgender/resources Information and resources for transgender people

www.loveisrespect.org – Information about sex, healthy relationships, dating, dating abuse, and sexting

www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/birth-control/ – Information about birth control

www.bedsider.org/methods – Information about birth control

www.safehelpline.org – National Sexual Assault Hotline 1-800-656-HOPE (4673)

www.stayteen.org – Information about relationships, love, sex, and pregnancy

www.teenhealthrights.org – Youth friendly guide to sexual health rights

www.teensource.org/condoms/free – Sign-up for free condoms if you are 12-19 years old and live in California



The suggested resources in this brochure are provided for your convenience for general informational purposes only. The California Department of Social Services bears no responsibility for accuracy, legality, or content of these external websites.

My case worker is: _____
 Phone #: _____
 My attorney is: _____
 Phone #: _____
 My CASA is: _____
 Phone #: _____
 My trusted person is: _____
 Phone #: _____

Ok, I get it. Youth have rights.
What do I need to do about it?!

See handout

*“Sexual and Reproductive Health Care Rights
of Youth in Care and the Caregiver’s Role”*

Part III: Engaging with youth about sexual and reproductive wellness

A. Overview of Sexual Development

What's typical, what's atypical?

B. Talking to Youth about Sex, their Bodies and Relationships

C. Helping Youth Understand Consent

How did you first learn about sex?

Please answer in a few sentences on an index card. You may choose to share:

1. How old were you and where were you, at school, church, home, a friends house?
2. Who were you with? a friend, sibling/relative, parent or other adult?
3. How did you feel when you learned this information for the first time?

A few responses will be read to the group by your instructor. Please only share what you're comfortable with. The way some of us learned about sex may not have been pleasant. This is also the experience of many of our youth in care.

Sexual development begins at birth!

“Young people do not wake up on their thirteenth birthday, somehow transformed into a sexual being overnight. Even young children are sexual in some form.”

-Heather Coleman, PhD & Grant Charles, PhD, *University of Calgary, Alberta, Canada and The University of British Columbia, Vancouver, B.C.*

What is “Typical” or Healthy Sexual Development for Children and Youth?

- Some sexual behaviors and interests commonly occur for children during particular stages of development. These can be completely normal and healthy although they are sometimes concerning to new caregivers or for those who haven't cared for a young child/adolescent recently.
- Some actions/behaviors in children are *not* typical and could be a result of past trauma. These may necessitate reaching out to professional for guidance
- Always talk to your child's case management worker when you have concerns.

Typical Behaviors for Ages 0-4	Possible Atypical behaviors
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Exploring/touching private parts, in public and in private• Trying to touch mother's or other women's breasts• Removing clothes and wanting to be naked• Attempting to see other people when they are naked or undressing (such as in the bathroom)• Asking questions about their own—and others'—bodies and bodily functions• Talking to children their own age about bodily functions such as "poop" and "pee"	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Behavior that is clearly beyond the child's developmental stage (for example, a three-year-old attempting to kiss an adult's genitals)• A very young child using adult words or phrases to describe sex acts

Typical Behaviors for ages 4-6	Possible Atypical behaviors or Red Flags
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Purposefully touching private parts (masturbation),• Attempting to see other people when they are naked or undressing• Mimicking dating behavior (such as kissing, or holding hands)• Talking about private parts• Exploring private parts with children their own age (such as “playing doctor”, “I’ll show you mine if you show me yours,” etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Not wanting to be left alone with certain people or being afraid to be away from primary caregivers, especially if this is a new behavior• Tries to avoid removing clothing to change or bathe• Excessive talk about or knowledge of sexual topics• Resuming behaviors that they had grown out of, such as thumb sucking, bedwetting• Nightmares or fear of being alone at night• Excessive worry or fearfulness

Typical Behaviors for Ages 7-12	Atypical Behaviors/Red Flags
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purposefully touching private parts (masturbation), usually in private • Sexual play with children their own age (such as “truth or dare”, “playing family,” or “boyfriend/girlfriend”) • Attempting to see other people naked or undressing • Viewing/listening to sexual content in media (television, movies, Internet, etc.) • Wanting more privacy (not wanting to undress in front of other people) • Beginnings of sexual attraction to/interest in peers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaves “clues” that seem likely to provoke a discussion about sexual issues • Writes, draws, plays or dreams of sexual or frightening images • Develops new or unusual fear of certain people or places • Talks about a new older friend • Suddenly has money, toys or other gifts without reason • Thinks of self or body as repulsive, dirty or bad • Exhibits adult-like sexual behaviors, language and knowledge

My child is displaying typical or age appropriate sexual behaviors. Do I still need to respond to the behavior or do I just let it be?

Even though some sexual behaviors are completely normal, they may still require a caregiver to talk to the child about boundaries or privacy.

Parents should respond to typical sexual behaviors or curiosity in a child by staying calm and not shaming the child.

Pulling the child aside discreetly, when you notice a behavior and talking to the child using easy to understand terms is best.

What if I think my child's behaviors are atypical behaviors or red flags?

- Do your best to not react with shock or shame.
- Remove your child from an unsafe or inappropriate situation calmly and discreetly. Then talk to the child privately about what happened.
- Discuss your concerns with the youth's social worker or probation officer.
- A counselor, pediatrician or other child specialist may be able to give you tools and tips on how to best respond to your child's behaviors

What if this subject makes me uncomfortable?!

That's ok! It's normal to feel a little awkward!

Activity: Get into small groups and discuss:

1. In the past, how have you been talking to your youth of various ages about sex or their bodies?
2. Was there a situation or event that brought up these conversations?
3. What's going well, what's been tough?
4. Any positive experiences to share?

Fact or Fiction?

Talking about sex with my children will just encourage them to become sexually active?

This is Fiction!

In a recent survey of American teens, 9 out of 10 teens said it would be easier to delay sexual activity and prevent unwanted pregnancy if they were able to have “more open, honest conversations” with their parents on these topics.

When you talk honestly with your children about sexual issues, you can give them the knowledge and skills they need to keep safe and to make good decisions about relationships and intimacy

From the NCTSN- National Child Traumatic Stress Network, *Sexual Development and Behavior in Children*

Tips for Engaging with youth

- Build rapport, get to know the youth and their likes, dislikes, dreams, goals, favorite foods, tv shows, etc.
- Be genuine, honest and open minded
- Be prepared for reactions like anger, aggression, hurt, profanity or silence/withdrawal. These are their survival skills kicking in!

Put your biases aside when engaging with youth

- Don't make assumptions about a youth's knowledge about sex or birth control
- Do not assume the sexual orientation of the youth
 - i.e.- Don't ask a male child if they have a girlfriend, keep statements neutral and ask if they are seeing anyone or if they like anyone.
- It is the youth's right to have access to information and health care services. If your religious, cultural or personal beliefs conflict with the youth's needs, you will have to set your beliefs aside.

Sometimes its hard to get the words
out...

What if I tried to engage, but my youth
won't open up to me?!

Let's brainstorm.

What should the caregiver do?

1. Jill is a sixteen year-old foster youth. She shares with her caregiver that she had unprotected sex recently and now has missed her period. She thinks she might be pregnant and is scared.
2. What are some things the caregiver can do or say to show support to Jill?
3. What should the caregiver NOT do?

Meeting the youth where they are:

- Caregivers are encouraged to meet the youth where they are, not expect them to meet them where they are!

What does this mean?

- Meeting the youth at their level will give you insight into their thought process and what *they need* to hear from you, not what *you think they need* to hear.
- If you meet the youth where they are at, the youth will be more likely to reach out to you again in the future and feel a sense of trust

“Listen to us first, then educate us later.”

Learning to “check in” with yourself

- Exercise #4:

Take a moment and ask yourself, How is this training making me feel?

- Am I enjoying the subject matter? If so, why?
- Am I feeling anxious about the subject matter? If so, why?
- *Learning to check in with yourself can be a powerful tool for caregivers with teens and adolescents!*

Helping children and youth understand consent

- Some youth have been traumatized from a very young age and need to learn that they have the right to consent to any physical touch or sexual activity
- Adults can help children understand consent by modeling the act of asking for and giving consent. For example, Can I give you a hug?

Keep in mind healthy developmental stages and don't assume a person's gender identity or sexual orientation.

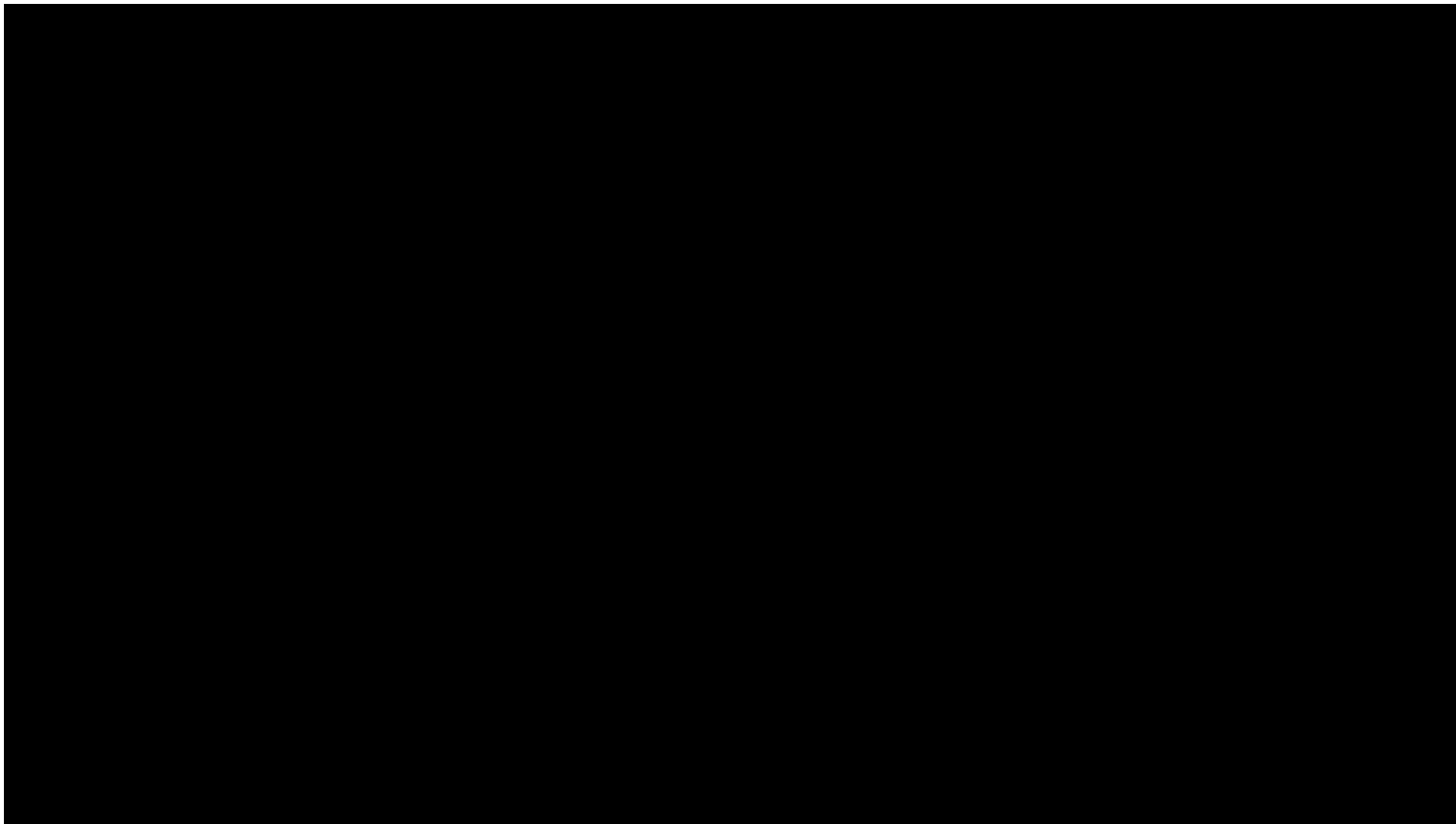
What Exactly is Consent?

- **Consent and relationships:**

Consent is when you and the person you are engaging with agree to participate in an act together. Consent doesn't just apply to sex.

- Consent is **not** a “continuous yes” and can be revoked at any time. You can say “yes” or “no” to an act at any time. It is ok for a youth to change their mind and say they no longer want to participate in an activity they had once said “yes” to.

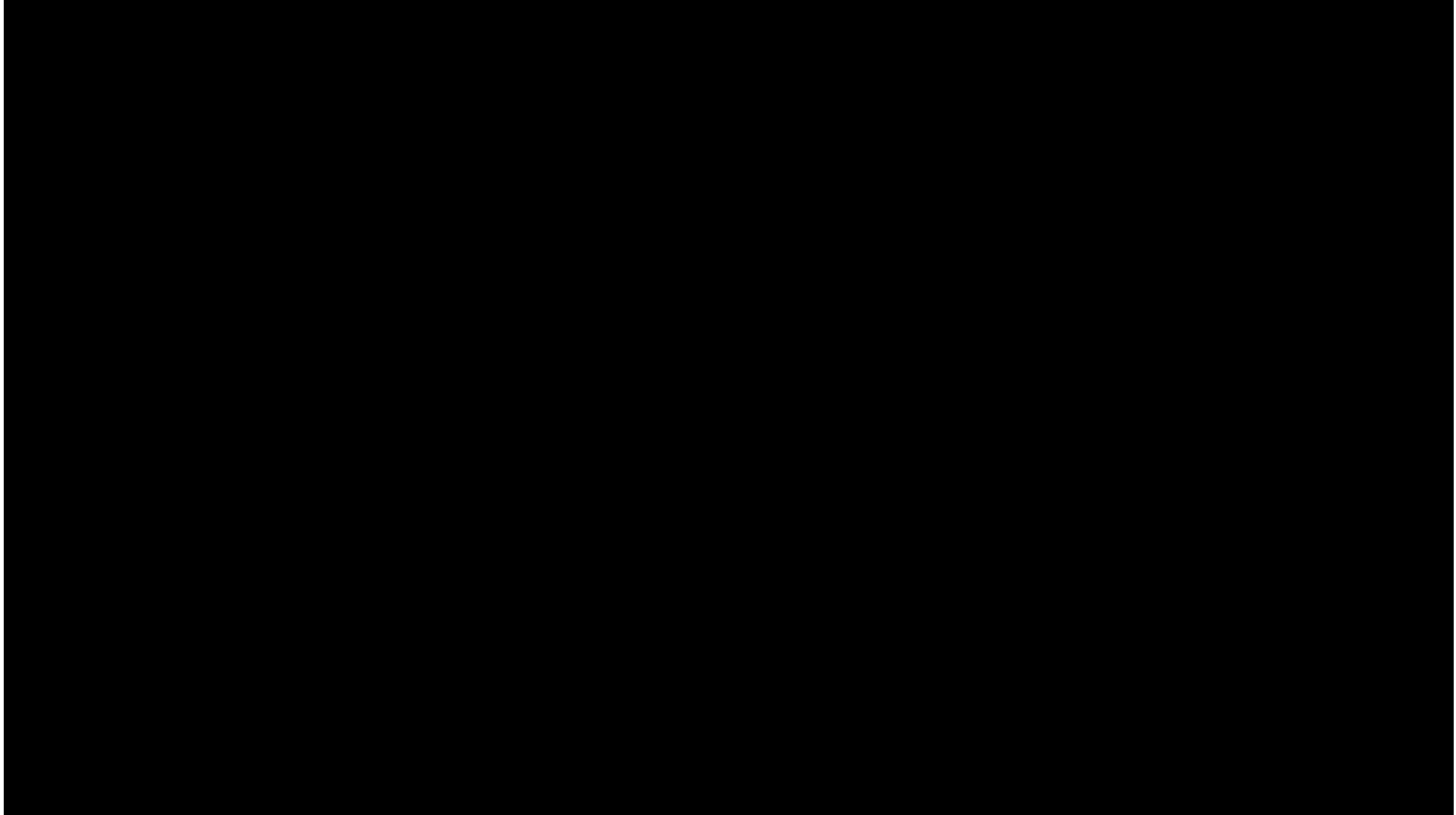
Consent Video Clip for kids



Supporting a youth's ability to express their Consent

- Learning consent begins at a young age!
- The act of giving consent is something a youth may be unfamiliar with which can make it difficult for them to establish healthy boundaries

Consent Video Clip for Youth



Talking to older youth about consent

- A person can't consent to sex/sexual activity if they are drunk or high or passed out!
- You can't consent to sex if your partner is a lot older than you (see "When Sexual Intercourse with a Minor Must be Reported" from National Center for Youth Law in materials section).
- Just because you had sex with someone before, it does not mean you have to have sex with them again. You get to decide what you are comfortable with, every time you are in a sexual situation! You have rights!

Healthy Romantic Relationships

Group Discussion:

- Many of our youth in care have been exposed to unhealthy romantic relationships and as a result often have difficulty identifying what is healthy/acceptable and what is not.
- What are the qualities of a healthy romantic relationship? How did you learn these cornerstones? If you've ever had difficulty navigating through a romantic relationship just think what our youth are feeling!

Establishing Healthy Boundaries

- Recognizing and creating healthy relationships as well as how to set healthy boundaries and express yourself in a healthy way are *learned behaviors*
- Many youth have not had healthy relationships modeled for them and thus have trouble recognizing 'red flags' when developing relationships
- Many youth have witnessed domestic violence or unhealthy, disrespectful relationships and therefore have difficulty advocating for themselves and developing healthy boundaries in their own relationships

WARNING SIGNS

Checking
cell phones,
emails, or social
networks
without
permission

Extreme
jealousy or
insecurity

Constant
belittling or
put-downs

Explosive
temper

Isolation from
family and
friends

Making false
accusations

Constant
mood swings
towards you

Physically
inflicting pain
or hurt in any
way

Possessiveness

Telling
someone
what they
can and
cannot do

Repeatedly
pressuring
someone to
have sex

Healthy Boundaries: Discussion

- A youth is sharing with their caregiver about her new romantic partner and the caregiver begins to feel the partner is being emotionally abusive and controlling.
- Caregivers: What would you say to this youth? What are some open-ended, non judgmental questions you could ask to help this youth think through her new relationship?
- Many of our youth are vulnerable to abusive relationships, controlling partners and even sexual exploitation.

Conclusion and Wrap Up:

- A caregiver ***is not*** expected to be an expert in the field of child development or adolescent sexual health and development
- A caregiver ***is*** expected to put their own biases and beliefs aside for the safety and best interests of their youth
- A caregiver is not expected to have the perfect answer to every question. Just respond in a respectful way and be willing to help the youth find the answer.

**Every person goes through trial
and error as they explore and
understand their own sexuality.**



Remember...

- We are all born sexual beings and it is normal to have curiosity, sexual feelings and desires.
- Youth have certain reproductive and sexual health rights. Caregivers have an important role in facilitating these rights
- It is important to engage with youth about reproductive and sexual wellness.
- Caregivers can assist youth with learning healthy boundaries within relationships and dating.

Want to learn more???

Your handouts have materials and suggested online resources for the following:

- Understanding birth control methods,
- Special populations of youth-
- CSEC, LGBTQ and TG/GNC
- Understanding Consent and links to videos for youth
- How to Talk to Youth About Sex
- ...And more!

If you are craving more info on this topic or have suggestions for follow up trainings, please contact your local Foster & Kinship Care Education program.

Thank you for participating in this training!

If you have additional questions about foster youth and reproductive/sexual health issues or feedback about this powerpoint, please reach out to the CDSS Healthy Sexual Development mailbox, at:

sexualdevworkgroup@dss.ca.gov

Please visit the Healthy Sexual Development Project webpage to view updated information and resources on this topic:

<http://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/Foster-Care/Healthy-Sexual-Development-Project>